

July 24th, 2002

To: Mark Mead, Senior Urban Forester
Duane Penttila, Horticulture & Forestry Services Manager
Woody Wilkinson, Maintenance Services Director
Christopher Williams, Park and Recreation Operations Division Director
Kerry Lasko, Central West Park and Recreation Manager

From: Fritz Hedges, Policy Director

Subject: Approval of Vegetation Management Plan for West Raye Street -
Magnolia Boulevard

As you know, Ken has recused himself from vegetation management issues involving view. He has delegated responsibility for decisions involving these issues to me.

What follows are my decisions for vegetation management along Magnolia Boulevard West in the vicinity of West Raye Street.

Since adoption of the Department's new Tree Policies in June 2001, this is the first Vegetation Management Plan prepared in response to a desire by upland neighbors for some view relief. The Department's Tree Policies allow property owners to prepare such plans so that they can achieve some view relief but only if implementation of the plan achieves a much broader public benefit. The property owners are responsible for most of the costs associated with preparation and implementation of the plans. The policies allow view pruning but do not allow tree removal to benefit private views.

In this case, we are looking at basically three (3) sections within the overall site. Upland of Magnolia Boulevard are areas 1, 2, and 3. On the water side, just along or below the Boulevard are areas 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Below that or along the upland side of West Raye Street are areas 5, 8, and 11. The area down slope of West Raye Street has also been discussed but is not part of the current plan. Each area has somewhat different characteristics in terms of slope and vegetation.

In making the following decisions, I have visited the site and rereviewed our Tree Policies plus reviewed all correspondence related to this plan, the public testimony at the Park Board's public hearing and the Commissioners' discussion and recommendations. I met with two of the upland neighbors, Bob Heller and Marco Magnano and conferred with geotechnical consultants Shannon and Wilson.

I generally agree with the draft goals for the plan as stated on page 2 of the May 14, 2002 document. I would add that an overall Departmental goal for Seattle's urban forest is to increase the amount of tree canopy so I generally feel we should try to achieve that goal in every vegetation plan. In this case, slope stability is probably the number one concern of our downhill neighbors. Therefore, maintaining or increasing slope stability should be

one of our high priority goals. We should pay particular attention to the Shannon and Wilson letter to David Reich dated September 13, 1999.

I think it is important to note that a "no action" approach could ultimately be damaging to the long-term stability of the slope. Some vegetation management, particularly the removal of dead or dying trees, is considered necessary for long term slope stability.

For purposes of the following decisions, I would like to differentiate between trees and stems. Trees represent the entire plant. Stems are a distinct part of the tree but a single tree can contain many stems. In some cases, the removal of one or more stems can lead to a short term loss of tree canopy but a long term gain in canopy as the remaining stems become more healthy. I refer to stems that are likely inhibiting growth of other stems as "restrictive". Removal of a tree would represent removal of all stems but not necessarily the stump or roots. Some trees such as the big leaf maples found on this site will often readily sprout new stems even if all existing stems are removed. In forestry terminology, this practice is called coppicing.

The essence of the plan is presented through the Table on page 11 of the draft. I find the plan to be consistent with our Tree Policies.

I am approving the plan. Upon request from the applicants, I would ask our staff to negotiate a Phase 1 permit based upon the following:

Limit the work in Phase 1 largely to the removal of dead, dying and/or hazardous trees (includes tree replacement), removal of invasive plants and replacement with native plants, removal of selected restrictive stems in designated view corridors and careful pruning in view corridors. The pruning must be done in a way that has negligible effects on the health of trees. The amount of work required that is forest restoration not related directly to view relief should be clearly of significant public value.

Remove dead, dying and/or hazardous trees within the area addressed by the plan.

Remove invasives and replace with native plants in the middle to south end of Area 2 (primarily ivy), Area 4 (primarily blackberry), the west end of Area 5 (primarily blackberry), Area 8 (primarily ivy) and Area 10 (primarily ivy).

Accommodate 3 view corridors within the parameters of the permit (refer to attachment).

Remove selected restrictive stems but limit such work to the view corridors.

Allow low level tree pruning known as "crown raising" in Area 2.

Allow pruning for view corridors through Areas 6 and 9.

Allow more limited pruning for the corridors in Areas 5 and 6.

In terms of sections:

Up slope of Magnolia Boulevard

Limit work mainly to Area 2 with removal of invasives and carefully specified low level pruning plus removal of dead, dying and/or hazardous trees in any Area.

Down Slope of Magnolia Boulevard

Focus on removal of invasives in Areas 4 and 10, removal of dead, dying and/or hazardous trees in all areas, and carefully specified stem removal and pruning to create healthier trees and view corridors in Areas 6 and 9.

Up Slope of West Raye Street

Concentrate on removal of invasives in Areas 5 and 8, removal of dead, dying and/or hazardous trees in all areas, and carefully specified stem removal and pruning for healthier trees and view corridors in Areas 5 and 11.

In large part, stem reduction to allow fuller growth of remaining stems will only be required or permitted within the view corridors and will not be a major element of the Phase 1 scope. Therefore, while the plan establishes upper limits for the removal of stems, these limits should not come into play. The scope as described should limit short term reduction of the canopy.

I am also asking our staff to do the following:

1. If the upland neighbors agree to a scope and funding, the Department will issue a permit only for the first phase.
2. The Department will provide site neighbors advance notification of work, time frame and who to call with any questions or concerns.
3. The Department will review and approve the tree service contractor proposed by the upland neighbors. The Department shall retain the right to dismiss a contractor from park property if the requirements of the permit are not followed or met.
4. The Department will inspect the site for slope disturbance and erosion control needs. The permittees will be responsible for installation of erosion control measures as directed.
5. In order to better judge pruning needs, tree work will only take place during the period of the year when leaves are on the trees. Removal of invasives will take place in the summer and must be followed by replacement planting in the fall of the same year. No work is to take place during the winter months. The amount of ground area disturbed in the overall site at any one time is to be carefully managed by the Department's Urban Forestry staff.
6. Department staff will specify each tree and stem to be removed and the location and type of tree used in replacement. The Department will specify areas where invasives are to be removed and a planting plan for replacement. The Department will specify exactly what pruning is to be allowed. The Department will carefully monitor all work performed by the contractor.

7. The Department will ensure that each tree removed is replaced by at least 2 new trees planted on the site in the vicinity of the tree that is removed. Understory plantings will be required in areas of invasive removal as per plan specifications.
8. Before initiating any second or future phases, the Department's Urban Forestry staff will conduct a public meeting in the area of the site to discuss the first phase and any terms or conditions which should be part of permits for future phases.
9. Within the next 2 years, the Department will initiate discussions with the downhill neighbors towards identifying non view related work that might be desirable within the area down slope of West Raye Street and see whether City funding can be identified within the 2005/2006 biennium for implementation.

In approving the Vegetation Management Plan for West Raye Street - Magnolia Boulevard, I want to recognize the efforts of the upland neighbors who worked with us on the planning and also recognize the concerns of the downhill neighbors. As noted, implementation of the plan or Phase 1 is dependent on work to be sponsored by the upland neighbors under the terms set forth in the plan, this approval and a potential Departmental permit. I thank everyone for your help.

cc: Ken Bounds, Superintendent, Parks and Recreation
Seattle Board of Parks Commissioners
Individuals Testifying at the
Parks Board Public Hearing

Attachment: Aerial photo showing proposed view corridors (next page).

FH/dh

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